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Corps to hold public meeting May 11 in Oxford on Buffumville Lake master plan for project, land management operation

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 in Oxford, Mass., on the draft Master Plan for project operations of the Buffumville Lake project in Charlton and Dudley, Mass. The draft document is available for review at local libraries and on the Corps website and the public has until June 15, 2011 to provide comments on the plan.

The Master Plan covers 480 acres of federally-owned land at Buffumville Lake. It prescribes an overall land and water management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts which provide the best possible combination of responses to regional needs, resource capabilities and suitabilities, and expressed public interests consistent with the project's authorized flood damage reduction purposes. The Master Plan covers all project resources, including fish and wildlife, vegetation, cultural, aesthetic, interpretive, recreational, commercial and out-granted lands, easements and water.

Inputs to the planning process were surveys and management plans for natural, wetland and cultural resources, and an analysis of recreational use, capacity and projected needs for project lands. Natural and man-made resources were located, identified and analyzed, including wetlands, exemplary natural communities, and cultural resources that require management efforts for their protection. These were integrated into project-wide objectives to protect and enhance project resources and promote and develop, as appropriate, those resources for public use, education and access.

The public notice notifying the public of the Corps intent to update the Buffumville Master Plan was published on May 21, 2008 and town leaders were notified by letters on June 10, 2008. Since then the Corps has been working with the public and stakeholders to develop the plan that is now available for review. A public meeting to discuss the draft plan will be held on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at 7 p.m. at the Hodges Village Dam Project Office at 30 Howarth Road in Oxford, Mass.

Buffumville Lake is located on the Little River, about 1.3 miles upstream of its confluence with the French River. It is 10 miles southwest of Worcester, Mass. Construction of Buffumville Dam began in October 1956 and was completed in April 1958 at a cost of \$3,068,000. Through Fiscal Year 2010 the facility has prevented approximately \$105.9 million in flood damages. Project operations at the dam site make up 30 acres of the project's total acreage. Land set aside for multiple-resource management consists of 170 acres of the total. The developed recreation areas include park, beach, associated facilities, boat ramp with parking, and disc golf course with parking, consisting of 40 acres. Land designated as environmentally sensitive, the lake and its abutting wetlands, comprises 230 acres.

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Buffumville Lake draft master plan public comment period/2-2-2-2

The dam is composed of rolled earth, a concrete ogee spillway and rock slope protection. It is 3,255 feet in length with an average height of 25 feet and a maximum height of 66 feet above the river bed. The top of the dam is at elevation 539.0 feet mean sea level. The dam includes a 220-foot-long overflow concrete ogee spillway with three gated conduits through this spillway. Three, 3-foot by 4.5-foot electrically operated slide gates control flow through the conduits. The spillway crest is 220 feet long and is at elevation 524.0 feet mean sea level. The intake channel is about 450 feet long with a bottom width of 22 feet. A concrete weir controls a permanent recreation pool at the 11 foot stage.

A 610-foot-long Pierpoint Meadow Pond dike, top elevation of 539.0 feet mean sea level, was constructed in a saddle at the south end of the Pierpoint Meadow Pond. The spillway crest is at elevation 524.0 feet mean sea level. The capacity of the reservoir at spillway crest is 11,300 acre feet which is the equivalent of a runoff of 8.0 inches from the drainage area of 26.5 square miles. When filled to spillway crest, the reservoir would extend up the Little River approximately 1.7 miles and up the South Fork for 1.9 miles with a surface area of approximately 530 acres. The permanent pool elevation of 492.5 feet mean sea level creates a lake 2.25 miles long, covering approximately 200 acres.

Recreational opportunities were identified through an analysis of regional needs and the public participation process. The planning process identified opportunities for improvement of existing recreational facilities, enhancement of boat and beach facilities, picnic area and play fields, and multiple resource management to enhance and protect important natural and cultural resources. Enhancing and preserving the resources by careful management of user conflicts were also identified.

The demand for recreation at Buffumville Lake is expected to continue at a high level in the future. The carrying capacity of the project is constrained by the size of the beach, restrooms and limitations on the availability of parking. A review of recreational level of activity and demand did reveal the need for minimal expansion of the recreational facilities that should be addressed by the park manager.

The Master Plan provides guidance for future development at Buffumville Lake. The natural and man-made resources at the project will continue to be managed to provide the best combination of responses to regional and ecosystem needs, project resources and capabilities. All specific proposals for recreational or other development at the project must comply with the Master Plan, the Thames River Basin flood damage reduction requirements, and the National Environmental Policy Act and federal requirements.

The draft plan is available for review at the Buffumville project office and the Town of Charlton Public Library, 40 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507, and the Town of Oxford Public Library, 339 Main Street, Oxford, MA 01540. It is online at www.nae.usace.army.mil. Select projects and Buffumville Dam Master Plan or go to the link at http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/projects/ma/BVL_MasterPlan/BVL_MasterPlan.htm. It is accessible from the Buffumville Dam recreation website at: <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/recreati/bvl/bvlhome.htm>. Public comments on the master plan should be sent by June 15, 2011 to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, Buffumville Lake and Hodges Village Dam, Attn: Project Manager Tim Russell, 48 Old Oxford Road, Charlton, MA 01507 or by email to timothy.g.russell@usace.army.mil. Additional information is available from Project Manager Tim Russell at 508-248-5697 or 978-318-8426.

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